YALE LAW X WOM

THE WORKS OF D. H. LAWRENCE

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THE WOMAN WHO RODE AWAY

AND OTHER STORIES

D. H. LAWRENCE

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APPENDIX V

'The Man Who Loved Islands': First manuscript version

Note on the text

The text follows the autograph manuscript (MS); see Introduction, pp. lix–lx. Deletions and additions have been indicated; deleted fragments of three or fewer letters are not recorded. Pencil additions made by Lawrence for typing (usually when starting a new page of the typescript) and other revisions in pencil are printed in semi-bold. He also noted the page-numbers of the typescript in MS at 324:26 (8) and 336:37 (25).

A full stop has been added after 'noiseless' (330:2); a new paragraph was begun at 330:19, where Lawrence inserted 'n. p.', '&' has been expanded at 323:25 and 335:12, and the apostrophe has been added to 'didnt' at 334:12.

The following symbols are used editorially:

< > = First deletion
≪ ≫ = Second deletion
⌜⌝ = First addition
⌜⌜⌝⌝ = Second addition

<The Islander.> ⌜The Man Who Loved Islands⌝

There was a man who loved islands. He was born on one, but it didn't suit him, as there were too many other people on it, besides himself. He wanted an island all of his own.

An island, if it is big enough, is no better than a continent. It has to be really quite small before it *feels like* an island. And it has to be very small indeed, before you can quite fill it with your own exclusive personality.

Now circumstances so worked out, with this lover of islands, that by the time he was thirty-five he actually acquired an island of his own. He didn't acquire it as his very own property, but he leased it for ninety-nine years, which, as far as an island and a man are concerned, is as good as forever. Since, when you think of islands, you don't think of your children and your grandchildren. If you do, the island at once begins to overflow, and to become a suburb. Which is a horrid thought, for one who loves an island for its insulation. An island is a nest which holds one egg, and one only. This egg is the islander himself.

Now the island he acquired was not in the remote oceans. It was quite <a> near at home <spot>, with a solid, old, rather gloomy dwelling-house above the landing place, and a <sort of> small farmhouse with a few fields behind, and down near the little landing-bay, three cottages in a row.

It was therefore a quite cosy, homey island in itself, <it was> four miles if you walked all round it, through the gorse and the black-thorn<e> bushes, above the steep rocks of the sea and down in the little glades where the primroses<.> ⌜grew.⌝ If you walked over the two little hills, the length of it, through the rocky fields where the two cows lay, through the field of potatoes, and through the oats, out to the gorse again on the low cliffs, it took you only twenty minutes. When you came to the end, you could see <other,> ⌜another,⌝ bigger island beyond. <b>⌜B⌝ut the sea was between you and it. And as you returned over the turf where the short, downland cowslips nodded, you saw to the east still another island, but a small one, an islet this time, like the calf of the cow. And this <islated> islet also belonged to the lover of isles.

He loved his island very much. In spring the little ⌜lanes and⌝ glades were a snow of blackthorn, puffs of white among the silent, Celtic stillness of close green and grey rock, and blackbirds sending out of the

whiteness their first long, triumphing calls. Following the blackthorn and the nestling primroses came the blue apparition of <wild> hyacinths, little lakes and slipping sheets of blue, among the bushes and under the glade of trees. And many birds with nests you could peep into, <i>⌜o⌝n the island all your own.

Followed summer, and the cowslips gone, the wild roses faintly fragrant through the haze. There was a field of hay, and foxgloves stood looking down. You bathed on the pale granite sand, and came home through the ripening oats, in the hot silence, the glare of all the sea in the air. <T>⌜W⌝hen the oats were in sheaf and shock, in the autumn evening rose a big ripe moon, itself an island, your twin loneliness, looking back at you.

So autumn, <and> ⌜ended, with⌝ the rain, and ⌜came⌝ winter, with dark skies and rain, but rarely any frost. <And t>⌜T⌝he island, your island, cowering dark, holding away from you! You could feel, <out of> ⌜down in⌝ the wet, sombre little hollows, the resentful spirit coiled upon itself, like a wet dog coiled in gloom, or a snake that neither sleeps nor wakes. <Only> ⌜Then⌝ in the night, when the wind left off blowing, you felt that the little island was a universe, infinite and old as the darkness, and that you weren't on an island at all, you were just there in the infinite darkness, with all the other souls of the night that stretched back down the countless ages of nights.

For if you put yourself upon a little island in space, you suddenly, or gradually, find yourself out upon the great vast plains of <t>⌜T⌝ime, where souls flock on their endless errands all around you. When, in the city, you wear your white spats in the park, or dodge the traffic like an animal running to earth, then you are absolutely safe and tight on a little island in Time. It is the spatial universe that careers around you.

But once isolate yourself on a little island in space, your hold on the moment begins to slacken, and you feel the huge Traffic of Time around you, you dart to avoid strange chariots that dash down the highways of the years, and you search in vain for the sa<v>⌜f⌝e pavement or footway of souls that move in the space of Time, in throngs that make you afraid.

Something of this happened to our lover of isles.

≪Come to think of it, Time is no illusion as the philosophers would have it. It is a vast, even an infinite <inner and> reality. It is the elusive fourth dimension itself: just Time, that so-called nothingness. It is the thing that is the mystery in Relativity.

Isolate yourself <in> ⌜in⌝ space, and you find yourself loose <in> ⌜on⌝ the infinite of Time. It is what happens to hermits and monasteries.

Our Islander, then, found himself projected, from the isolation of space, into the infinity of Time. Whatever has once existed, exists forever in the infinite of Time. It vanishes only out of space. In Time it exists undiminished.

So with the island. It was an island in Space, but it was a seething centre in the infinity of Time. Strange races had lived there. Out of space they were gone: In Time they lived still. For in the infinity of Time, what is before and after is not cut off. Isolate yourself in space, and you can quite easily turn round to fraternise with the far-gone Gauls or Druids or so-called Pelasgians,* who only exist in the unbreakable realm of <t>⌜T⌝ime. Once, once become an islander, and you will know it.

But of course, it is much safer to remain a burgess of space, three-dimensional. We are used to Space. Time was always a bugbear.

So it was with our Islander.≫ All that unscientific business of "feelings" came upon him. Strange awarenesses of old, far-gone men⌜:⌝ <came upon him:> men of lost races, who had had their altars on the island: men of Gaul, with big moustaches, who had come and who had vanished: priests, with sanctuary, and then pirates, with murder on the sea.

<An island in space is a sort of nucleus in the infinite of Time.> As you reduce space more and more<,> to a single point, a point being that which has no length or breadth, only position, so, more and more you force yourself to step off the vanishing point of <s>⌜S⌝pace into the infinity of Time.

Anyone who tries an island will find this out.

Our islander found it so. He was uncannily half-aware, in the darkness, that what was a blackthorn-grove in the realm of space and daytime, was ⌜among the darkness⌝ a crying of old men of an invisible race, around the altar stone. What was a ruin <by> ⌜under⌝ the hornbeam trees by day, was a moaning of bloodstained priests on the ineffaceable <darkness> ⌜night⌝. What was a cave and a <priest> beach between coarse rocks, became <at night> ⌜in the invisible⌝ the purple-lipped imprecation of pirates.

To escape this, the lover of islands concentrated daily upon his island. Why should it not itself be the final Happy Isle, the last of the

Hesperides, the perfect place, all filled with his own personality? Why not a minute world of pure perfection, a tiny Paradise-Regained?*

He tried to do it by spending money. The old, semi-feudal dwelling-house he restored, and put thick carpets on its floors, and gold curtains at the deep, sullen windows, and wines in the cellars of rock. He brought a buxom housekeeper over from the world, and a soft-spoken, much-experienced butler. These too were to be islanders.

He brought over a <man> ⌜bailiff⌝ to be farmer in the farm-house, and <too> ⌜two⌝ farm-hands to <help.> ⌜work.⌝ There were Jersey cows with slow-ringing bell, among the gorse. There was a meal in the farm-kitchen at midday, and smoke of chimneys at evening.

He bought a small sailing ship, <a yawl, and there was a man in one cottage to be skipper. So he had a ship and a skipper, who also fished at sea and came> ⌜a little yacht with motor accessory, ≪⌜⌜and⌝⌝ on the beach in⌝≫ ⌜⌜and it rode in the bay near⌝⌝ ⌜the end cottage⌝ ⌜⌜of the row, where⌝⌝ ⌜lived a family from the big island, a father who was skipper. So there was a yacht and a skipper, and also a little yawl, in which ≪in a common little yawl,⌝≫ ⌜⌜the skipper went fishing round the isle, coming⌝⌝ home at evening with his boy, and the basket of his catch. Then the ⌜two little⌝ ship's⌝ rode in the tiny bay. Or, in storms, <she was> ⌜were⌝ beached.

He also brought a carpenter, <and> ⌜a⌝ man of all work, who could mend the old window frames and restore the timbers of the barns<:> ⌜, and work in the garden:⌝ an old man with an old wife. This old man also was by instinct an islander, for he had no children and worked long long hours, of his own choice. He lived in the middle cottage.

In the third of the cottages in a row upon the little harbour was a mason with his family, a man who, with his boy of fifteen, could build and fence and make ditches, and whose daughter could serve in the House.

In short, it was a little world, and all busy. A buxom housekeeper from the metropolis, a smooth-lipped butler who had lived all over the world, maids from the cottages on the beach: a farm-bailiff with two farm-hands, one of whom had a wife and two small children, and all of whom came over from England, but one from Sussex, one from Berks, the bailiff from further west. Down on the beach, a family of Celts, the old man and wife from Norfolk, the mason-family from Kent, cheek by jowl in the cottages.

Well then, it was a little world, the Islander's own, very own world.

To everyone in this world, he was The Master. Ah, not any more just Mr. Somebody-or-Other. He was The Master. Even to his wife, and to his guests in the Old House, he was The Master.

But not a tyrant. Ah no! He was a delicate Master, delicate, poetic, handsome, and in his way, shrewd. He treated his wife and his guests royally. And with his "people" of the isle he was rather like a young fine god among men, a smiling young Hermes smiling his unspoken message, instead of a "boss." In his creamy-white clothes he went during sunny mornings to see the Jersey cows come in to milk, or to watch the weeding of the turnips, or to superintend the restoring of the great old barn or the building of the new dairy. And always he was fine and clear and handsome, looking shrewdly on the work and speaking cleverly and friendly to the people, "his" people. In wet weather he came in his cloak and broad dark hat, to sit in the farm kitchen and talk with the men, "his" men, or ⌜he went over⌝ to the mason who was carving a memorial stone under the shed, or ⌜down⌝ to the cottage where the skipper was overhauling a small net.

And always he was greeted with smiles, and a peculiar deference, as if he were a higher, but also <weaker> ⌜frailer⌝ being, to be handled with every mark of respect, but without much fear either. When he left, the smile often lingered on the face of the men, "his" men, with a touch of derision. He was fine, he was very kind, he was shrewd enough; but!—there was no need to be afraid of him!

⌜The sad fact is, general good-will is always a bit of an insult to the receiver of it. It begets a most peculiar malice and a circle unusually vicious.⌝*

So his little world, that he had wanted to make perfect, was not quite real. He himself was busy: he loved flowers, and was slowly accumulating material for a book on the flowers of the ancient world. He wanted to find every possible reference to flowers in the Greek and Latin authors, then make a kind of flora of the Ancient world. He knew Italy very well, and he had made several trips to Greece and to the Isles, always looking for flowers. Now, with his library—he had brought over some thousands of books to the island—he was working away at his hobby.

Not that he was a great classic scholar. His Latin and Greek were of the ordinary public school dimensions. But he had the best translations of all ancient works.

The first year on the island passed in getting things into order. But at the end of that year, bills flooded in that made the Master look pale.

He was not a rich man. His year had cost him thousands and thousands of pounds.

Still, the bulk of the spending lay, surely, in these bills for the first year. Now everything was more or less complete, the island was more or less in running order. So he took heart, and paid many of the bills, though it made a large hole in his capital, and the <others> remainder created a standing debt.

He hoped very much that once all the building and altering, and buying-in of stock and implements was over, the island would be self-supporting. The farm and the fishing would produce enough, or almost enough, to pay the way of the island. For this island had to have its way paid, <and> ⌜for⌝ amazingly expensive it had proved, that first year.

The second year, however, was to be the year of the first harvesting. The Master, shocked by his expenditure, began himself to study how to make his island return to him what he had spent on it. He read many books on agriculture, the raising of crops, the breeding of cattle, dairy-produce, chicken-farming. With his quick, facile mind, he grasped the essential points, for he was shrewd as well as clever. And sitting in the library with the bailiff over a pipe and a pot of beer, while the wind howled and the rain lashed upon the island outside, he brilliantly ran over his discoveries. He was so handsome, and his blue eyes had such bright assurance in them, as his slim hands flicked emphasis in rather a foreign manner, that the bailiff did no more than repeat "Yes, Sir! Yes, Sir! That's right, Sir!"

But the man was hardly listening. He was looking at the Master's pink lawn shirt and the rich purple tie with a fiery red stone, the <m>⌜M⌝aster's exquisite sleevelinks, the ring with the curious scarab. And the brown, cautious eyes of the man <who knew> ⌜**of**⌝ the soil glanced repeatedly over the fine, exquisite figure of the Master, with a sort of slow, calculating wonder. But if he happened to catch the bright, <happy> ⌜**exalted**⌝ glance of the young <Master's> ⌜**man's**⌝ eye, his own eye lit up slowly with a careful cordiality and deference, as he bowed his head slightly.

So, between them they decided what crops should be sown this year, what manures should be used, which breed of pigs should be imported. That is to say, the bailiff, by continually cautiously agreeing with the Master, kept out of it, and let the young man have his own fanciful way.

Now the Master was no fool. His suggestions for the land were

perfectly good. The bailiff even knew it. But in the man of the soil there was no answering enthusiasm. The brown eyes smiled their cordial deference, but the straight lips never changed. The Master pursed his own flexible mouth in a boyish volatility as he went on with his reasoning, and the bailiff's straight lips never changed, however his eyes responded, upon necessity.

So it was settled, and the Master rang for Elvery, the butler, to bring a sandwich. He, the Master, was very pleased. The butler saw it, and came back with anchovy sandwiches and a newly-opened bottle of vermouth. There was always a newly-opened bottle of something.

It was the same with the <M>⌜m⌝ason. The Master asked him if he could drain a little swamp that lay between the gorse-bushes. Of course he could. No, it would not take long. It would need drainage pipes and a little culvert—and so on. Things that must be ordered.

Fine weather came, work on the island was in full swing, the Master went for a cruise in his yawl along the coast of the mainland. There were three men to look after the boat, and the butler to see to the cabin. The weather stayed fine, the Master ran into the little ports and fishing places, his own people disembarked him as if he were a prince.

But it turned out expensive. He had to telegraph for money. He went home again, to economise.

The marsh-marigolds were blazing yellow in the little swamp where the ditches were being dug for drainage. He almost regretted, now, the work in hand. It would be the last year of the marigolds.

But he celebrated his return with a feast to all his people, in the long barn that was now completely restored. There was a long table, lanterns hanging from old rafters, <the Master handsome in a velvet jacket at the head of the table, all his people at the board.> the bailiff presiding. There was a fine supper, with beer, and sweet drinks for the women, and towards the end, the Master appeared, handsome in a velvet jacket.

All his people turned round to see him. The bailiff stood up and said:

"The Master! Long life and happiness to the Master!" Then all his people drank his health with great enthusiasm. After which he made a little speech at the head of the table, saying they were on an island and a world of their own, and he hoped everyone was happy, and the island would continue to be the one happy and creative spot in a world otherwise full of troubles.

The bailiff, the skipper, and the butler responded with <great

enthusiasm.> ⌜virile acclamation.⌝ So long as the island had such a Master, it could never be anything but prosperous and happy.

⌜**But under all this, things were not well.**⌝

The very next morning, however, came the <bailiff> ⌜farm boy⌝ to say that one of the cows had fallen over the cliff. The Master went to look. He peered over the not very high declivity. There she lay, the beautiful, expensive creature, dead and already swelling, on a green ledge under the flowering broom. It was a question of getting several men to haul up the carcase. And then, nobody would eat the meat.

This was symbolic of the island. As sure as the ⌜human⌝ spirits rose in a sort of <joy,> ⌜release, in the Master's breast,⌝ an invisible hand struck out of the silence, with strange malevolence. Foundations were found yielding. The yawl ran foul of a rock. A farm-hand lay crippled with rheumatic fever, after working to drain th<e>⌜at⌝ swamp.

Out of the very air came the strange, heavy, stony malevolence. The island itself seemed <very> verily wicked<; i>⌜⌐t would go on being wicked for two or three weeks at a time. Then suddenly again one morning it would be fair, pristine as a morning in Paradise, almost too lovely. And everybody would begin to open in spirit like flowers in soft sun.

Then as sure as they were opened out, some ugly blow fell on them. There was jealousy and dissension among the people: they began hinting things <to one another> ⌜to the Master,⌝ about one another.

"Some folks thinks they've got an easy job out here, with all the pickings they make!" the daughter of the mason said brutally, to the butler, in the Master's hearing. He pretended not to hear.

"My man says this island is surely one of the lean kine of Egypt, it would swallow a sight of fat cattle and good money, and you'd be no further with it," said the wife of the farm-hand to one of the Master's visitors.

They were not contented. They were not islanders. Eighteen months on an island is worse than prison. In prison you're part of the community, anyhow.

Yet the island was so lovely! When there was a scent of honeysuckle on the air, and the moon brightly flickering down on the sea, you loved it with a strange nostalgia, and you wished to be far back, far back in the past, the past of the island, away from the present. Night-time, and the scent of honeysuckle, and the scent of hay!—and ah, the pain of yearning for the mysteries of the far-off past, the old sacrificial cruelties and strange passions which still beat in the secret heart of the

island! Strange floods of passion sweeping over one, the passion to destroy <, destroy, destroy what is in the present!> ⌜what is in the present and to enjoy unknown, long-lost enjoyments.⌝ Strange uncanny dreams, strange half-dreams, imaginations of blood and torture!

The Master himself began to be a little afraid of his island. He knew himself ⌜now⌝ that his people didn't love him at all. They had lurking, invidious grudges against him, he could feel their secret malice, envy, mockery. ⌜He began to feel isolated as well as insular, and he didn't like it.⌝

By the end of the second year, some of the "people" were preparing to depart. The housekeeper was going, the mason and his family, and both the farm-hands. The housekeeper couldn't stand it, the farm-hands wouldn't work under the bailiff, the mason said it was nothing but <a monkey-show> ⌜monkeying about⌝ and he wasn't going to do any more monkeying jobs that didn't belong to his <line of work.> ⌜trade.⌝

And then bills came in, and accounts were made up. There had been good crops, twenty-pounds worth of oats, twelve-pounds worth of potatoes had been sold, seventeen-pounds worth of butter.

Yet the island had cost, not hundreds, but thousands of pounds. Something like nine thousand pounds had gone in the year.

It was incredible. <But i>⌜⌐t was absolutely, absolutely incredible! The Master spent <bitter> ⌜gloomy⌝ nights and days, in the library, going through accounts. When he started, he was thorough.

He emerged pale, hollow-eyed, and looking as if a mule had kicked him in the stomach. Yes, the money had gone, sure enough: More! There were bills not yet come in. It had all been spent, and more.

But was it possible! He had bought nothing really expensive, as in the first year. The first year he had been lavish, and he had expected to spend a good deal. But this year, after the first year's shock, he had been careful!

It couldn't go on. Everything was working against him. His butler had definitely, extravagantly swindled him. But then he had been such a *marvellous* butler. Still, he must go. The housekeeper was going of her own accord. What about the bailiff? Was he too a robber? And the skipper?—was his finger also in the pie?

The only ones beyond suspicion were the old carpenter and wife, and these two the Master didn't like very much, they were so uninspired.

The third year was spent in rigid cutting-down of expenses. The island still was mysterious and fascinating. But among the bluebells lurked the adder, and the fox gloves on the brightest days were bending their heads to hide the smile of mockery. The island was always laughing at you behind your back, and planning you mischief.

With reduced staff, reduced splendour, ⌜reduced wages,⌝ the third year went by. And the expenses amounted to over four thousand pounds. The farm, instead of paying its way, had again lost a great deal. The island seemed like an octopus, reaching for money with every tentacle.

Yet the Master loved it. He loved it rather bitterly, with rancour and resentment, still he loved it.

But he spent the second half of the fourth year, after having passed the first half in a sort of paralysis of resentment, intensely working on the mainland to dispose of <the island.> ⌜it.⌝ All he wanted, now that he had made up his mind, was to be rid of <it> ⌜his island⌝, like a man who wants a divorce at any price.

But it wasn't till the middle of the fifth year that he finally transferred it, at a considerable loss to himself, to a rich speculator who wanted to make it an hotel island, with golf links. A honeymoon-hotel-and-golf island.

There! Take that! Take that, island which has let me down!

⌜The Second Island.⌝

The Islander had to move. But not to the mainland: oh no! He moved to his smaller island. With him went the faithful old carpenter and wife, and a lad, and a widow with a daughter, who had kept house for him the last year on the larger island.

The little island was quite small, but being a hump of rock in the sea, it was bigger than it looked. There was a little <trail> ⌜track⌝ between the rocks and bushes, <that wound> ⌜winding⌝ up and down, around the islet. It took twenty minutes to walk round the island, and then there was nowhere else to go.

Still, it was an island. The Islander himself moved, with all his books, into the common-place six-roomed stone house, up to which you had to scramble from the rocky landing-place. There were also two joined-together cottages. The old carpenter with his wife and the lad lived in one, the widow and daughter in the other.

At last all was in order: the Master's books filled two rooms, and he began to work. It was autumn, and already Orion lifting out of the sea. But at night The Master could see the lights of his other island, where the rich prospector was entertaining guests who would advertise the island as a resort.

On his hump of rock, however, the master was alone. And he explored the crannies, the odd bits of grassy level, the steep little cliffs where the last harebells hung, and the seeds of summer were brown above the sea, lonely and untouched. He peered down the old well. He examined the tiny paddock where the few sheep had been kept. Himself, he had two goats.

And always, always, underneath among the rocks the celtic sea sucked and washed and smote in its feathery greyness. How many different noises of the sea<,>⌜!⌝ deep explosions, rumblings, strange long sighs and whistling noises, then real voices, actual people clamouring as if they were in a market, out of the waters: and again the far-off ringing of a bell, surely an actual bell! then a tremulous trilling noise, very long and alarming, and an undertone of hoarse gasping!

On this island there were no human ghosts, nor ghosts of any <of> ancient race. The sea, and the spume and the wind and the weather had washed them all out, washed them out, so there was only the sound of the sea itself, myriad-voiced, communing and plotting and shouting all winter long. And only the smell of the sea, and the few bristly bushes of gorse and coarse tufts of heather, among the grey, pellucid-seeming rocks in the grey, more-pellucid air. The coldness, the freshness, even the soft, moving fog of the sea! And the islet of rock humping up in it all, the last point in space.

The green star Sirius stood over the sea's rim. In the house the lamp was lit: the widow was preparing the supper, her daughter helping. Behind the small breakwater the motor-boat and the row-boat were safe. The light shone also in the carpenter's kitchen. That was all! Save that out at sea a ships lights showed small.

The Islander went in to his meal. Here at least he was at peace. The carpenter and his wife and the lad in the cottage were good and faithfulness itself. Working while ever there was light to work, without thought or desire for money. The widow, too, and her quiet, rather delicate daughter of thirty, were devoted to the Master. They would have given the skin of their fingers to make him gloves to save his hands.

But on this island he was no longer The Master. They called him by his name, Mr Carstairs. And they spoke to him softly, very gently.

And he spoke back to them in the same soft, gentle way, like seagulls when they are noiseless.

He no longer struggled to make a "world" on his island. He no longer struggled for anything. Indeed, he had no need. It was as if he and his few dependents were like a small flock of six birds travelling in space, and keeping together without a word. Perfect as the silent travelling of migrating birds.

He spent almost all the day in his study. His book was coming along. The widow's daughter even began to type out his MSS for him. It was the one strange sound on the islet, the sound of the typewriter. But soon, even its spattering fitted in with the gamut of the sea's noises and the wind's.

The months went by, the Islander spent more and more time in his library, the people went quietly about their own ends. The goat had a little black kid with yellow eyes. There were mackerel in the sea. The old man fetched the mail from the big, populous island, when the weather was good enough, and bought the supplies. Days went by, and nights went by, without desire or without ennui.

The strange stillness from all desire was a kind of wonder to the <i>⌜I⌝slander. He didn't want anything. Desire at last was still in him, and his soul was like a half-lit cave under the sea, where the feathery sea-foliage expands upon its watery atmosphere and scarcely sways, and a mute fish shadowily slips in and slips away again. All still and soft and uncrying, yet alive, very much alive.

<For the first time in his life the Islander was happy.> ⌜**The Islander said to himself: Is this happiness?**⌝ He said to himself: I am turned into a dream. I feel nothing, or I don't know what I feel, yet it seems to me I am happy.

Only he had to have something upon which his mental activity could work. So he spent long, silent hours in his study, working not very fast, nor very importantly, letting the writing spin softly from him as if it were drowsy gossamer. He no longer studied if it were good or not<.> ⌜, what he produced.⌝ He slowly, softly spun it like gossamer, and if it were to melt away as gossamer in autumn melts, he would not mind. It was only the soft evanescence of gossamy things which now seemed to him permanent. The very mist of eternity was in them. Whereas stone buildings, cathedrals for example, seemed to him to howl with temporal resistance, the definite limitation of their long endurance seemed to howl forth from them all the time.

Sometimes he went to the mainland and to the city. And he went

elegantly, dressed in the latest style, to his club, and he sat in a stall at the theatre. He went to publishers and discussed his book with apparent enthusiasm. But over his face was that gossamy look of <being left> ⌜having dropped⌝ out in the race of progress, which made the vulgar city people feel superior to him, and made him glad to go back to his island.

He didn't mind if they never published his book.— Spring came. There was never a primrose on the island, but he found a winter aconite. Two little bushes of blackthorn: and some white violets. He began to make a list of the flora of his islet. He noted a wild currant bush, and watched for the elder-flowers on a stunted tree, then for the dropping yellow of broom, and wild roses, bladder-campions, orchids: he found three varieties. When he came across a new flower in some cranny, he would crouch in a trance, he knew not how long, looking at it.

And he would come home and tell the girl who attended to him and helped him with his MSS—she was over thirty now:

"I found stitchwort this morning, under the thorn-bush."

She looked at him with brown, aching eyes.

"Did you, Sir! Is it a nice flower?"

He pursed his lips and tilted his brows.

"Well—not showy, you know. But very attractive in its way. I'll show it you if you like."

"I should like to see it."

She was so quiet, so wistful. She said she was so happy. She followed him so quietly, like a shadow, on the rough track where there was not room for two people to walk side by side. On all the island, there was never room for two people to walk side by side. So she followed softly, silently, submissively, in the one fear of intruding.

It was almost a kind of pity for her which made him become her lover. But the moment he had fallen, a jangling <kind of> entanglement came upon him. He went away, and climbed at the risk of his neck down to a ledge near the sea. There he sat for hours, motionless, gazing miserably at the sea, and saying unconsciously to himself: Not that! Not that! Not that!

It was the automatism of sex that had caught him again. Not that he hated sex in itself. On the contrary, he deemed it a great life-mystery. But it had become automatic and mechanical, and he wanted to escape that, through to a sort of stillness of desirelessness, and so, perhaps, on in the strange journey, to emerge into a new fresh delicacy of desire,

and a new unknown gentleness of sex. Back into the old thing he did not wish to be dragged.

When he came home, very late, and saw her face white with fear and guilt, he pitied her again, and spoke to her delicately, reassuringly. But he kept himself remote from her.

And she gave no sign. She served him with the same silence and abstraction, but now, when he occasionally met her brown, aching eyes, he saw in them the mute question. The question came direct at him.

So he fell to her again.

"Not," she said to him, "if it will make you hate me."

The <question> ⌜words⌝ pierced him like a bullet.

"Nonsense!" he said.

Then afterwards, in the exasperation he felt, he abandoned himself to her for some time, and his island was shattered. He was completely reckless, his island was <shadow> shattered, he had lost his place in the rare, desireless levels of Time which he had to cross, he abandoned himself to his exasperated desire for the woman. Her name was Flora.

Then that desire left him, and in a new exasperation he departed from the islet. He wandered about the continent.

There came a letter from Flora, saying she was afraid she was going to have his child. He sat down as if he were shot, and remained sitting, figuratively, for some time.

It so happened, at this moment there was an auction of islands in the city. He went to this auction and, for very little money, <went> bought an island. He had read the full description. It was a mere <nine> ⌜twelve⌝ acres of rock rising some <thir>⌜fif⌝ty feet, at its highest <point,> ⌜curve,⌝ above the sea. There was not a building, not a tree on it. There was a pool of rainwater, stretches of northern sea-turf, rock, a bit of sedge, and nothing else. Under the weeping wet western skies.

He made a trip to visit his new possession. For several days, owing to storm, he could not approach it. Then, in a light sea-mist, he landed, and saw it hazy, low, stretching apparently a long way. He walked over the wet, springy turf, and dark-grey, wet, spectral sheep ran away from him, bleating. He came to the dark pool, and the sedge. He went on again to the grey sea sucking angrily among the rocks.

It was indeed an island.

Then he went home. Flora looked at him with guilty fear, and again he was gentle and reassuring to her, and his desire came on him again.

So he took her to the mainland, and they were married, since she was going to bear his child.

They returned to the islet. She still brought in his meals, but her own as well. And she sat and ate with him. He would have it so. The widowed mother preferred to eat in the kitchen. Also Flora slept in the guest-room of his house, as mistress of his house.

His desire died in him with nauseous finality. Flora was going to have a child. His islet was a hateful suburb, there might as well have been trams running before the door of his house.

But through the long months before the child was born, he stuck it out. Meanwhile he thought of his wet rock in the west.

A nurse appeared, and then a doctor. The nurse stayed on in the house, she even had meals at his table. The doctor only stayed when the sea was so bad they could not land or embark at the island.

What was the islet indeed but a suburb of suburbs!

The <son> ⌜daughter⌝ was born, the father looked at the baby. Something inside him felt terribly depressed, but he tried not to show it. Flora gradually got well, and she began to look at him with those aching brown eyes. This he could not stand.

He told her he had to go away for a time: that he had settled the best part of his property on her and the child: that it would produce her a certain income. He gave her a cheque book, and wrote down for her the <some> ⌜sum⌝ that she had to her credit, and the half-yearly income that would be paid in to the bank <to her. I> ⌜**interest. And he told her i**⌝f she got tired of the island, she could cho<se>⌜ose⌝ her home wherever she wished.

She followed him with those aching <brown> ⌜, <<in>>⌜⌜**per**⌝⌝sistent brown eyes⌝ when he left, and he never even saw her weep.

He went straight north, to prepare his other islet.

The third Island

The third island was soon made habitable. With cement and the big pebbles from the landing-beach a hut was built by two men, and roofed with corrugated iron weighted with stones again. Then he had a boatload of furniture—bed, chairs, table, a big kitchen cupboard, a few books. Another load of supplies, paraffin oil, coal, food—and he was ready.

The house stood near a little cove where he kept his boat. On a sunny day in August the men sailed away and left him. The sea was

still and pale blue. On the horizon he saw the mail-steamer passing. She was the little boat that served the outer isles, and in calm weather he could row out to her. He could also signal her from a flagstaff behind his cottage. So he would not be lonely, or cut off, for she made two voyages, going northwards beyond him, every week.

There were half a dozen sheep still on the island: they too were alive. And he had a cat to rub against his legs. While the sweet, sunny days of the northern autumn lasted, he would walk among the rocks, and over the springy turf of his domain, slowly, looking at every leaf that might be different from another. He had never a tree, not even a bush in his world. Only the short turf, and a few little turf-plants, and the sedge by the pool. He was glad. He didn't want trees or bushes. They stood up like people, too assertive. His bare, low-pitched island in the pale blue sea was all he wanted.

He no longer worked at his book. He liked to sit on the low summit of his isle and see the sea: nothing but the pale-blue, faintly hazy quiet sea. Sometimes, like a mirage, he saw the shadow of land to northward. But he didn't want to see it.

And he watched the steamer passing, almost on the horizon, with fear lest she should stop and signal him. He could not bear the thought of having to speak to human beings. He hated to speak aloud. Even when sometimes he spoke out to his cat, he was annoyed with himself. When she looked up and mewed faintly at him, he smiled inscrutably. When one of the sheep opened its mouth and baa-ed, he watched it, and it seemed to him the image of all stupidity.

Only he could bear the sharp wild cries of the gulls, and the noise of the sea. Nothing else. He wanted no other vocal sound. And above all, he wanted no approach of another creature.

He decided that, before the snow came, he would get rid of the sheep. They were accustomed to him now, and stood and stared at him with such yellow, almost sinister ridicule. He always felt they ridiculed him. And when they jumped with staccato jumps off the rocks, and their hoofs made the dry sharp hit, and their fleece flopped on their square backs—he found them repulsive, like vermin creeping over his island. On the first of October, or soon after, a boat would come out to him, and he would send them away.

The fine weather was over. It rained, and all day long he lay on his bed and heard the rain trickling from his roof into the zinc water-butt, and looked through the open door at the rain, the darkened rocks, the hidden sea. Many gulls were on the island now: many sea-birds of all

sorts. Quite a number were unknown to him, and he had his old impulse, immediately to order a book on the subject, and find out what they were. Even he decided to row out in the rain to the steamer. The names of these birds: he must at least know their names. How could you know anything until you knew its name?

Then even this desire left him, and he merely watched the birds as they wheeled and walked about him, watched them with a vague, secondary interest. All desire had left him, and almost all interest. Only there was one big gull, a very handsome fellow, big, and pearl grey, and with the voluptuous soft outlines of pearls: only, the folded pinions of his wings were black, with three very distinct white spots. And this bit of decoration seemed to him remarkable, on a sea-bird. And this particular gull would walk many times back and forth in front of his door, back and forth, back and forth, strutting on pale-gold webbed feet, and holding up his pale-gold, slightly curved beak with curious importance, as if he were on a mission of some sort.

"What is your message then?" the man asked silently. "What message?"

But he never knew. The bird one day had left.

But many birds were on the island at one time: the place was alive with them, and the sound of wings, the flash and the cut of wings in the air, in the rain. He could not walk ten yards without setting the birds into a run, and into a lift of flight. They were curiously unafraid of him.

Then they too all began to depart, as the days shortened and the world grew eerie. The boat came. It was an effort to talk to the men. The islander resented cruelly their intrusion. The homely look of their fisherman clothes was repulsive to him. Any suggestion of the familiar he found repugnant. Himself, he was well-dressed and very neat. His little house was neat and tidy, almost over-tidy. He could not bear even the slightest intrusion into his own milieu.

The letters the men brought he left lying unopened in a little box. One had his very small quarterly income inside it, but he did not open it. He wanted no contact, no contact. He loathed the hustle of getting the sheep caught and tied. He felt an intolerable weight slip off him as the boat at last lifted her sail and left. At last he was alone again, with the cat. Thank god those munching sheep were gone.

The dark days of winter drew on. Sometimes there was no real daylight at all. Sometimes he felt ill, as if he were dissolving, as if dissolution had set in inside him. Once, when he went to the door, he

saw black heads of men swimming in to his cove, and he nearly fainted, such was the shock of having to meet, unprepared, human beings who would talk to him. The shock, the horror of the approach to him, <of> unprepared, of human beings deprived him for a long time, in a twilight, of his true reason. Then he realised the swimming heads were the heads of seals, and a great sick relief came over him. They were not men! Thank God they were not men! He went into his cabin and wept with relief. But he never realised he wept. Like some strange ethereal animal, he no longer remembered what he did.

Only he drew some strange satisfaction from being alone, all alone, with the loneliness soaking into him. He was alone on an island. The grey sea was around him. Nobody could come near. Nobody! And that was like bread to his soul: the positive loneliness, the impossibility of the approach of anything from the outer world.

For this reason he was glad when there was a storm, or the sea was high. He suffered from the noisy violence of the wind. It was too much like an intruder. But he felt another satisfaction, because then no boat could possibly come near him. He always liked the sea to be heavily, heavily rolling on his island. That was like eternal ramparts around him.

He kept no track of time, and could no longer bear to open a book. The print, the printed letters were so human, so like the depravity of speech, he could not bear it. He tore the brass metal label from his paraffin stove: he obliterated any bit of lettering he could, from around him.

During the dark weather, his cat disappeared, and he was rather glad. He could no longer bear her to rub against him, or to hear her thin, obtrusive call. He would no longer leave her in the house. She could go in the little lean-to shed where his coal and paraffin were. And each morning he put her a plateful of the porridge he lived on, outside the door. And with repulsion he washed her saucer for her. He could not bear the way she arched her back, and looked at him with green, much too human, too animal eyes. He loathed the animal, anything animal.—She never came for her porridge. ⌜She was gone.⌝

So now he was alone. He prowled about his island in the rain, in a great oil-skin overcoat, like some sort of ghost. He never knew what he went to see, or what he saw. And he was oblivious of the passage of time. But he would stand for hours gazing from a white, sharp face, with those keen, far-off blue eyes of his, gazing fiercely and almost cruelly at the dark sea under the dark sky. And if he saw the labouring sail of a fishing boat, a strange malevolent anger went over his features.

Sometimes he was ill: he knew he was ill, because he staggered as he walked, and easily fell down. Then he paused to think what it was. And he went to his stores, and took out dried milk and malt, and ate that. Then he forgot again. He ceased to register his own feelings.

The days were beginning to grow longer. The weather had been comparatively mild all winter, but much rain, much rain. He had forgotten when it didn't rain.

Suddenly, however, it became cold, and he began to shiver. It was very cold. Yet the sky was level and grey, and never a star at night. More birds appeared. The island began to freeze. With trembling hands he made a fire in his grate.

And now the cold continued, day after day, with occasional crumblings of snow. The days were lengthening, but the cold was the same: cold grey daylight. More birds passed, flying away, flying away. And everything that departed southwards and left him more alone pleased him. "That's another gone!"

Then one night he slept better, did not tremble and wake and writhe so much. He had become so used to the quaking and writhing of his body, he hardly noticed it. But when it slept, he noticed that.

He woke in the morning to a curious whiteness. It had snowed. His window had mufflings of snow. He got up and opened his door. Ugh! how cold! But all white, with a dark leaden sea, and black speckled rocks. The foam was no longer white: it was dusky. The rest was dead white, where the sea left off eating in. Crumbles of snow were silting down.

A foot of snow had fallen: all white and soft. He took a shovel to clear round his door and his shed. The gleam of morning light darkened. There was a strange rumbling of far-off thunder, and through the falling snow a dim flash of lightning. The snow now fell steadily downwards, in the clear obscurity.

He went out for a few minutes. But the snow obscured everything, and he could not keep his footing on the rocky ground hidden in whiteness. Weak and faint, he toiled home. And he actually took the trouble to make hot milk.

It snowed all day. During the afternoon was a muffled rumbling of thunder, and through the falling snow, ruddy flashes of lightning. Uneasy, he went to bed and sat staring fixedly.

The next morning, his house was a cell faintly illuminated with white light. The snow was over his window, he could not look out. And when he opened his door, the snow confronted him in a wall as high as his breast. It stopped him.

Looking over the snow, he felt the cold wind driving, he saw the snow-powder lift and whirl. And beyond, the blackish sea was churning and champing, seeming to bite in to the snow. The sky was grey, but luminous.

He began to work, in a frenzy, to make himself a way through the snow, to the sea, to his boat. He must be able to get at his boat.

But he was weak, and at times he gave up, and lay motionless and unconscious in the snow itself. Some strange prodding awoke him. He went indoors to make hot food: coffee, and bacon, and biscuit. It was long since he had cooked so much. But now he had a new incentive. He must conquer the snow. The snow must be conquered.

He worked in the fierce, driving wind, throwing the snow aside, beating it down with his shovel. It was cold, freezing, except when the sun came out for a while, and showed him his white, tomb-like surroundings, with the black sea rolling sullen, flecked with dusky foam, beyond. The sun seemed quite hot. It was <m>⌜M⌝arch.

He made his way to the boat, and felt a great relief. He pushed the snow off the roof of its little shed. Then he sat down under its lee, and watched the sea. The sun had gone again. Snow was falling in hard crumbs, that vanished as if by miracle into the blackness of the sea. The waves broke heavily, and rushed up over the shingle, trying to get at the snow. Where the rocks were wet, they were black. And all the time the crumbs of snow, demonish, touched the dark sea and disappeared.

In the night there was a great storm, and it seemed he could hear the heavy snow striking the island, striking the sea. The wind roared in strange hollow volleys, and in between came a jump of blindfold lightning, then the low roll of thunder like far-off artillery. When faint daylight silted in, the storm had more or less subsided, but a steady wind was driving. The snow was up to the top of his door.

In a frenzy he worked to dig himself out. And he managed to clear a space in front of his house. He was in the tail of a great snowdrift, many feet high. When he got through it, the harder snow was not more than two feet deep. But he could no longer recognise his island. The contours were gone. Great strange white hills rose up. He was sickened and afraid.

His boat was in another smaller drift, but the way to it was swept. He laboured to clear the shed, but he was too faint. The shovel fell from his hands. He sank dimly in the snow, listening to the huge hollow biting of the sea.

Something prodded him, and he crept back to his house. It was cold. He had the energy to re-start his fire. The wind dropped, the sky darkened: it began silently to snow again. And all afternoon, in the gloom of snow, the thunder rumbled and cracked, the blear lightning leaped reddish and sore. He sat in bed in a sort of despair. This snow was like some unnatural beast he had to contend with.

It went on, he knew not how many days: but on into eternity. Sometimes the sun shone hot. Once, on the frozen snow, he was able to get out, even to climb to the top of the whiteness which was his ⌜unrecognisable⌝ island, and look over the black, raving sea. He even imagined he saw the wink of a sail. But he knew it was not so. There would never again be a sail on that black sea.

And as he looked, the sky mysteriously darkened and chilled. From far off came the mutter of thunder, and he knew it was the snow rolling over the sea.